

PASTOR DECLARES CHRISTIAN IS THE WORLD'S TRUE OPTIMIST

Dr. Luther R. Dyott Says Thoughts Are Masters of Life and Real Thinker Sees Good Things With Bad.

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That which hath been is that which shall be, and that which shall be done is that which shall be done; and there is no new thing under the sun.—Ecclesiastes 1:9.

If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things are passed away; behold they are become new.—II Corinthians 5:17.

THOUGHTS are masters of life. Some persons think. Others do not. When one does not think one lives at random; and life at random ends at zero, or something worse than zero.

Among those who think are some men and women whose thoughts are right and others whose thoughts are wrong. Right or wrong, thoughts take the color and quality of the soul and the mind giving them birth.

Back of the habitual thinking, which forms and establishes one's home-made philosophy of life, is the thinker himself, with his nature and mood and habits of thought. When that man is a pessimist the exhalations of his mind will laden the mental atmosphere about him with pessimism. When he is an optimist his thoughts will be characterized by accuracy, perspicuity, amplitude, justness.

Blessed is the man who enjoys mental health and to whom every new-born day brings the good morning of God, no matter what the natural weather may be. We deliberately prefer his company. Our texts present two erudite authors who contend each other. The philosophical creed of one is pessimism and that of the other is optimism. To one there was no new thing under the sun. To him life had become stale, monotonous, a dull uniformity, wearisome; and there was no fresh bloom upon the face of the future as far as he could see.

He was a disappointed man. He had given full and free play to his desires, appetites and selfish ambitions. He had used his eyes, his ears, his hands, his tongue, his mind. But his eyes had not been satisfied with seeing, his ears with hearing, his hands with handling, his tongue with tasting, his mind with investigating, discovering and knowing.

Amid such light as he possessed his own shadow made a black spot. He had disquieted himself for any great and distinct mission in life. When a man unites himself for service to God and humanity he has committed the most fatal tragedy of his life.

God Mentioned 37 Times.

Theologically the author of the book of Ecclesiastes was fairly orthodox, according to the intellectual beliefs of his day. In his strange book he mentions the name of God 37 times. He was not an atheist. Again, the God he recognizes is personal deity and clearly distinguished from his creation. So this man was not a pantheist. But his formal belief was repudiated by the condition of his soul. He was not in tune with God. To the discordant soul the world is discordant, the vision of life is blurred and all life is full of disappointment.

To the other author, Paul, life is altogether different. His view is new, because he, himself, is new. His is the Christ-envisioned life, his the philosophy of optimism. Broadly he affirms

that this newness of life is possible to any man. Jesus was an optimist, his life the mission of an optimist. When one lives in Christ he has a new view of life and comes to estimate men in divine terms. He sees all things in their true relatedness.

Thus the phenomenality of life must have its new meaning through the reality of knowledge where nothing can be known as it is save in a vital consciousness which affords the primary datum of all knowledge in the experience of the fact at issue.

Pessimism Not Necessary.

The axis of vision is in ourselves rather than the objects of vision. Persons with jaundiced vision have the yellowness in their own hearts, but the pure in heart see God in all things and know him, as the great lover of the true, the now and the beautiful, in all the sublime movements of the God-filled life; but his love, immense and unconfined, is not limited to these things.

The same sun that gives the flowers their beauty and the stars their glory does not refuse its light to weeds. Where nature is impotent grace is omnipotent and God can change human weeds to flowers in the kingdom of heaven when we are willing to have him do so. No man needs to be pessimistic about himself or anyone else or the world in which we live or the present-day tendencies of the majority of the human race. But, nevertheless, some persons are given to pessimism. We should be thankful that it is not so with all.

Our two authors are representative of two classes of persons in modern times. There are many in the world today who know nothing of the joy of being alive on God's earth and who never see anything new in the world and in men, women and children, who are always interesting when we are willing to have them so.

Novelty Ends in Monotony.

There are so many who, still possessing the power to appreciate that which is new, have lost the gift to see it and even their love of novelty ends in monotony. Some of these try, once in awhile, to study human life, but because of their superficial observations here they do not see beneath the blurs, the blots, the sins and stains and their depressing conclusion with reference to mankind is this: "They are all gone aside; they are together become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." Shame on such a sweeping condemnation of humanity! Some of these pessimists try to study the cosmic order and fail to see that it has any moral ends. The days come and go and they see nothing new in any of them. They are all alike to the pessimist. Their intellect reels in the contemplation of the cyclic movements of nature, while now and again some of these men and women selfishly seek that which they think will give them pleasure, until the heart grows sick and the soul chokes with disappointment; and, at length, their experience is vividly described in some such words as those in Byron's last poem:

The flowers are in the yellow leaf;
The flowers and fruits of love are gone;
The worm, the canker and the grief
Are mine alone.

The fire that on my bosom preys
Is lone as some volcanic lake;
No torch is kindled at its blaze—
A funeral pyre.

The hope, the fear, the jealous care,
The excited portion of the pain
And power of love I cannot share,
I wear the chain.

All who have selfishly sought pleasure have failed to find it. No pessimist can ever be happy while he remains as he is. But all may be optimists of the right sort. Let us distinguish between the genuine and the counterfeit. Genuine optimism is of God, who has so ordered things in his universe that here everything is adapted to produce the highest good and the greatest possible good to the greatest possible number.

Nature and the laws of nature are on the side of good. Nothing in nature is against us or invested with evil, until men, by transgression, make it so. Most of the evils of life, if not all of them, are the goods which have gone over the line of right. Disease is not of God. Pain is only a burglar alarm in the interest of self-protection, reminding us that something ought to be done.

Truth Sure to Triumph.

In the realm of mind all truth is on the side of good. We should never fear the whole truth and we should always welcome it, through whatever means it may come. It cannot hurt us when we are trying to do right. We cannot finally hurt it, even when we do wrong. It is bound to triumph at last.

All who know the truth and live in truth are optimistic as to the final outcome. In the realm of soul life all the mightiest forces in the universe of the soul are on the side of good. Here no person need fear failure, for God and his kingdom are for us. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" No one. Even those who seem to be against us are helpless before God and the soul that dares to live in him, with him and for him. Wherever we look we shall see that all things, when ordered of God, are on the side of good and that nothing is beyond the reach of his almighty power. Even in the movements of evil when the "worst reaches the worst," things begin to turn, for "man's extremity is God's opportunity." This I take to be the view of a genuine optimism. Some have counterfeited it and have adopted the soft and smooth ideas of lazy indifference. To them it seems very sweet to fall asleep and dream that since this is God's world and he is in his world, there is little or nothing for us to do. Why should we be troubled or concerned, since all things will be well in the end? We need not be troubled, but we should be concerned, and concerned we will be when we are wide awake, to see things as they are. Then shall we find that God's great plan and method—for plan and method he has—contemplate our co-operation. When once we begin anywhere to co-operate with him, we spawn that counterfeit optimism of lazy men and then turn with the genuine optimism of God. Then no conditions in the world can make us despair, for the God of hope lives in us; human failures cannot discourage us, for beyond them we see our divine success; the darkest night does not alarm us, for we know that the world's tomorrow will be better than its yesterday, when we do our best to help God make it so; then we know that at low ebb the tide of good is turning, though the waves may be running in the other direction.

Optimist Is Confident.

God's optimist knows these facts and is, accordingly, confident. Grouped about this confidence in God are faith, reason, observation, knowledge and experience, all giving certain salient characteristics to this optimist. He has another characteristic. It is loyalty. This is very much needed in every age, with a truer and simpler meaning than that which gave this word its birth, and there never has been a time when it was more needed than it is just now. Perhaps there is

no place where it is more necessary than in America. Are not the reasons obvious? As Americans we should believe more than ever in the world-wide mission of our country and, with a well-balanced optimism, say as Rufus Choate said: "We join ourselves to no party that does not carry the American flag and keep step to the music of the Union." Then all persons should be members of some church to which they can be loyal and work there with unflinching optimism. But even deeper than all should be our loyalty to God. It has been said that "loyalty to God is alone fundamental." Feelings, words, deeds must be beads strung on the string of duty. Let the world tell you in a hundred ways what your life is for. Say you ever and only, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O, my God."

Mission To Be Performed.

Out of that dutiful root grows the beautiful life, the life radically and radiantly true to God—the only life that can be lived in both worlds. Had not Paul been loyal to God and his divine son, our Lord, he never could have been God's optimist, saying "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new."

Still another characteristic of God's optimist is his hopefulness—true hopefulness, than which human life has no better friend, filling our souls, and urging us onward, and telling us that we can make the coming days better than all that have gone before. Yet another characteristic is cheerfulness. By nature, by grace, by the love of God we are designed to be of good cheer.

Now, with all these characteristics, God's optimist is surely prepared for a God-given mission in this world where there are so many things contrary to optimism and this spirit is needed so much in the complex and manifold relationships of modern life. We should understand that optimism is something more than a sanguine temperament, or a pleasing philosophy, attempting to reconcile evil with the goodness of God; it is a good disposition taking the most hopeful view, and always looking on the bright side of things; or an innocent credulity with regard to the evils of the present life, making the optimist a negligible factor in the great movements of aggressive good, not counted by those who are willing to fight for the right, and not dreaded by the foes of the right. Some mild souls have made it this, but they have neither thoroughly understood this spirit of real life, nor have they demonstrated its worth.

The true optimist has an infinitely more serious business in this world than merely attempting to please everybody, and for fear of alienating a few cheap friendships does not dare to call his life his own. Popularity is not his first desideratum. He can fight when it is necessary, but he is not eager to fight. He is determined to do right.

You can never compel him to compromise on matters where right is involved. As much as he may appreciate the approval of others, he will sooner part with these than sell the truth, and a little squall comes. We should know that in a very profound sense the optimistic spirit is the correct way of looking at life, and the right way of doing things that ought to be done, and must be done, if we are to bring to pass a new order of things, which all must acknowledge to be so sorely needed.

We need some things that are old, and must remain. We need others that are new, and are long overdue. Discriminative and causative lives hold the key to the situation, and by the power of the eternal God they are in the world to do their part toward the solution of pressing world problems.

With God's philosophy of human life they see that all life is marked by an impressive periodicity with humanity slowly moving upward and occasionally losing its foothold and slipping backward, and sometimes falling down, but never relinquishing altogether the common hope of our common heart that some of these days the conditions of our common life will be better for us all.

Some of these days the skies will be brighter. Some of these days the burden will be lighter. Hearts will be happier, souls will be whiter. Some of these days, some of these days.

Some of these days we'll bear with our sorrow. Faith in the future, light will we borrow. There will be joy in the golden tomorrow. Some of these days, some of these days.

Today the world is in transition. These crises hours are awful. But it is not the death gurgle of good that we hear. It is the birth throes of a new order of things, and of a new humanity for a new heaven and a new earth where righteousness, with peace, will have permanent dwelling. Old things, which can no longer be of service, or remain only to haunt the new, must either pass away, or become new. The pessimist is mad.

It is not novelty that we need. It is truth. It is truth about God and man. It is the truth about life. It is the truth about ourselves. The truth which is so fresh from the soul of all its newness, entering our minds, and making them new, so that our lives may be transformed by the renewing of our minds, that we may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. The truth, making us new in Christ, so that we shall have the new view of life and live among our brothers with freshness of feeling, and a glad spontaneity of the Lord of hosts. But the truth which makes us new must be clothed in love, not merely for looks, but for winsome service.

Naked Truth Friskens.

Truth is the soul of life, whose body is love. The naked truth usually frightens us, but truth in love wins sinners, and makes them new men and women in Christ; it changes cowards into men of courage; it bids the weak be strong; it turns the poor old grumbler's complaints into praises; it makes the strong new, so that our lives may be transformed by the renewing of our minds, that we may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. The truth, making us new in Christ, so that we shall have the new view of life and live among our brothers with freshness of feeling, and a glad spontaneity of the Lord of hosts. But the truth which makes us new must be clothed in love, not merely for looks, but for winsome service.

We should, therefore, determine that optimism shall be the only mood of our reasonable and comprehensive and working faith. Since we know that this is God's world, no man's nor the devil's, and that amid the slow process of evolution, the whole universe and man are tending toward a better state, we have reasons to believe that all the excremental ills and evils of human society will be thrown off by the divine principle of eternal life, bringing newness of life to us; God has undertaken

to do something here, and he allows us to enter into co-partnership with him. The regeneration of a world of human beings is, indeed, a vast enterprise, but God cannot fail. Neither can we fail, in doing our part, when he is in us, and we are in him. Our new faith is old in its essential nature, but new in its consciousness and comprehensiveness. It takes in all there is of our true selves, all there is of humanity, as God can make it, and all there is of God, as we know him, and we have faith in ourselves, our brother man, and our God.

Now because of this, and because we and our brothers are not all that we ought to be, our faith is working in the mood of optimism. Each day we know God a little better, and we grow a little stronger and do a little better, while all the time our good is related to our better, and our better is related to our best, and we greet every morning with newness of life, and now and again exclaim:

Take heart with the day, and begin again.
Listen, my soul, to the glad refrain.
And in spite of old sorrow, and older sinning,
Every day is a new beginning.

We should determine to be minus of nothing that is necessary to make us God's optimists who are here on very clear and distinct missions for him, in him, and with him. We have observed these characteristics. Not one of them can be omitted. It takes a whole life to do the whole work of life. We are complete when we are in Christ. When we are new creations in him, nothing is left out. If we lack anything needful by our brother man, it shows that God has not done all for us that he desires to do. Give God his chance in your life, and you will give others what they need through your life.

Good Should Combat Evil.

We should determine to meet whatever is wrong in others with the opposite, positive good in ourselves. It is a greater thing to practice than it is to preach. There are so many persons with distorted notions about almost everything and everybody, that it is so easy to fall into the pernicious habits of fault-finding, grumbling, complaining and repining. God's optimist does not sordid such persons, who are thus making themselves old; but, in living among them he shows them the better way. He helps them to overcome their faults, and smoothes the wrinkles out of the souls of cynics. He never speaks unkindly about anyone, and is kind to everyone. Let us all belong to God's society of optimists. There are many reasons why we should be optimists of the true sort. Beginning with those which apply to ourselves, we should remember that our lives will be ruined by dwelling upon our grievances, fancied or real, as they may be. We cannot afford to be morose, elated at one time and despondent at another.

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